

REVISED

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

July 25, 2006

A significant number of foster children in Los Angeles County have parents who are in county jail or in state prison. There is limited research and few reliable statistics that fully capture the scope of the problem, however, recent studies indicate that there are 97,000 children statewide with parents in county jail. The harsh realities of incarceration pose significant challenges for a child to maintain a connection to their parent. For a child in foster care, this presents an even more significant barrier towards eventual family reunification, which is the ideal outcome that the Department of Children and Family Services works to facilitate.

Currently, there is no effective means or support for foster children to nurture an appropriate relationship with their incarcerated parent, or to even explore the possibility of reunification after the parent is released from jail. Minimal contact such as letter writing and phone calls are difficult to maintain, visitations are limited, and the parent has no consistent means by which to communicate with their child's social worker, if such interaction is allowed in the family reunification plan approved by the court.

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There is in place a highly successful model that may be applicable in Los Angeles County. The San Francisco Department of Human Services works with Friends Outside to address the special needs and concerns of incarcerated parents and their children in foster care. The agency acts as a liaison to the department, participates in case conferences, and acts as a general resource to the incarcerated parent and works with them inside the correctional facility where the parent is incarcerated.

I believe that a direct service such as this to incarcerated parents and their children will greatly enhance the chances of family reunification and enhance the well being of the child who has to cope with the challenge of foster care.

I, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Department of Children and Family Services work with the Sheriff's Department, and report back to the Board in 60 days on the progress in developing ~~on the feasibility of implementing~~ a program similar to the San Francisco/Friends Outside model, that enhances services and resources for incarcerated parents whose children have been placed in foster care, for cases wherein such interaction is allowed in the family reunification plan approved by the court.

I, FURTHER MOVE, that the Department of Children and Family Services work with the ~~DCFS Research Advisory Board to develop~~ Consortium to determine the feasibility of conducting a research project that establishes much needed statistical information as well as explores the issues surrounding parent incarceration and the impact on children in foster care.

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